

## 9/28/2009 This Week in Congress

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September 28, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress."

### Secret Iranian Nuclear Facility Makes Need for Action More Urgent

On Friday, the world learned that Iran has at least one other nuclear facility in addition to the one already known to exist in Natanz. This week's revelation that Iran has built a secret nuclear facility to enrich uranium makes the need for tough action against the regime even more urgent. International inspections at Iran's Natanz facility had previously made known that Iran had nearly enough low-enriched uranium that if further processed could produce two nuclear weapons. Now, it is impossible to know the true extent of Iran's nuclear program. There is absolutely no margin of error when it comes to U.S. policy and world response. We must act without delay and with unfailing purpose to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

### Recognizing 45th Anniversary of Job Corps

This week, the House of Representatives passed legislation that I authored designating September 23, 2009, as "National Job Corps Day" in honor of the 45th anniversary of the program. Fellow co-chair of the Friends of Job Corps Congressional Caucus, Congressman Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), worked closely with me on the legislation in order to recognize Job Corps for the work it does for many disadvantaged young people in the United States.

To commemorate Job Corps' 45th anniversary, approximately 60 congressional offices hosted Job Corps students for a one-day internship. I hosted Tanisha Walker of Topeka, a 24-year old student at Flint Hills Job Corps in Manhattan. I was grateful Tanisha could spend time in my office learning firsthand about government. [Click here to read more.](#)

#### Health Care Initiatives

The Health Savings and Affordability Act of 2009: This week, I sponsored legislation that would improve the current health care system by lowering costs while providing more access to quality health care. The Health Savings and Affordability Act of 2009, H.R. 3610, would make improvements and expansions to Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) while making health care insurance tax deductible for every American. HSAs are a proven form of "patient-driven health care" because they are cost-effective and efficient while giving patients control over how their health care dollars are spent. These plans enable people to take ownership of their health. [Click here to read more about the legislation](#) and [click here to read more of my ideas for common-sense health care reform.](#)

The Medicare Premium Fairness Act: On Thursday, I voted in favor of H.R. 3631, the Medicare Premium Fairness Act, to prevent Medicare premiums from rising sharply for some senior citizens. This bill would prevent about 11 million Medicare Part B recipients from having to shoulder more than their usual share of an annual premium increase because of complexities in federal law and the likelihood that Social Security benefits will not increase next year to cover the cost of the rising premiums. H.R. 3631 passed the House and now must be considered by the Senate.

Preserving Access to Medical Supplies for Seniors: I have asked the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to reconsider the enactment of burdensome requirements on pharmacies that could cause Medicare beneficiaries to lose access to critical medical supplies, like diabetes testing strips and prescription medications. CMS is requiring that pharmacies meet new federal accreditation and surety bond requirements that will place a tremendous financial burden on many Kansas pharmacies. Without Congressional action, these regulations will take effect October 1st. In these difficult economic times, many pharmacies may be forced to end participation in the Medicare equipment program, leaving seniors with no affordable access to the medical supplies they need.

### Protecting the Privacy of Social Security Numbers

This week, I sponsored H.R. 122, the Protecting the Privacy of Social Security Numbers Act of 2009. This legislation would prohibit the sale or display of Social Security numbers to the general public without an individual's express consent and prohibit state and local governments from displaying Social Security numbers on public records over the Internet. Additionally, this bill would limit when a business could request a Social Security number from a customer. Identity theft is a growing problem and H.R. 122 would better secure our Social Security numbers and prevent them from falling into the wrong hands.

### Commending Russ Meyer's Induction into National Aviation Hall of Fame

On Thursday, I attended a House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee meeting and spoke in support of resolution, H. Res. 719. This resolution commends Russ Meyer of Wichita, for his induction into the National Aviation Hall of Fame. As the former head of Cessna Aircraft Company, Russ was instrumental in the revitalization of the general aviation industry in the 1990's. In addition to his hard work in aviation, Russ is also well-known throughout Kansas for his generous philanthropic endeavors, especially for his contributions to the Special Olympics. He created the Citation Special Olympics Airlift, where Cessna citation owners transported athletes from across the country to the National Special Olympics Games. The resolution passed out of the committee and formally recognizes Russ's service and dedication to aviation and to his community. [Click here to view my remarks.](#)

## Attending Briefing on New Tanker Competition

Thursday, I attended a briefing by Air Force Secretary Michael Donley and other Department of Defense officials on the new refueling tanker competition. I was encouraged after hearing that the Pentagon's third attempt to compete for the refueling tanker contract will be more structured. The process appears to correct many of the problems that gave Boeing a disadvantage during its last attempt to win the tanker contract.

Despite improvements, I am concerned that the selection will not take into account the World Trade Organization's recent decision that Airbus received illegal subsidies to develop an aircraft that will unfairly disadvantage the Boeing bid. It is critical for Kansas workers, the U.S. military and American taxpayers that Boeing be given a fair shot at this contract.

## VA Issuing Emergency Checks to Students Awaiting GI Bill Benefits

Last year, Congress approved the Post 9-11 GI Bill, legislation which made historical enhancements to the education benefits for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. I sponsored this new benefit to fully fund the cost of an education to include tuition, books and housing.

The House Veterans Affairs Committee has worked with the VA to provide the resources to ensure timely implementation of these benefits for veterans. Despite assurances from the VA that implementation was on schedule, delays in

processing education claims has resulted in many veterans not receiving their checks in time for this fall semester. It is unacceptable that these students have to worry about their finances. In response, this week the VA will begin issuing emergency checks to students still awaiting benefits. More information can be found at the following Web site - <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1783>. I am hopeful these payments will help alleviate the financial stress felt by many veterans and allow them to focus on their studies.

## Taiwan Agriculture Mission Letter Signing Ceremony

Thursday, I met with members of the Taiwanese Agricultural Trade Goodwill Mission during a letter of intent signing ceremony. The Taiwanese Agricultural Trade Goodwill Mission of 2009 consists of 14 members and was led by Mr. Paul Ming-hsien Sun, Chairperson of the Board of The World Vegetable Center. For the seventh year, the Taiwanese group visited Washington, D.C., to sign a letter of intent to purchase U.S. corn, wheat and soybeans. Last year, Taiwan purchased a total of \$3.5 billion worth of agricultural products from the U.S. alone. Given our nation's current economic condition, we must use every possible opportunity to strengthen and expand existing trade relationships. [Click here to view a photo.](#)

## Hosting Tele-Town Hall Meeting with Kansans

This week, I conducted another Tele-Town Hall meeting from my office in Washington, D.C., to discuss current issues with Kansans. I was able to have a conference call with up to 25,000 Kansans and those who chose to participate in the call were able to ask me questions and express their opinions.

During this call, Kansans primarily focused discussion on the current health care legislation, immigration issues and Cap and Trade legislation. Thank you to those who were able to participate in the Tele-Town Hall.

Attending Kansas Ready Mixed Concrete Association Breakfast in D.C.

On Wednesday, I attended a breakfast with the Kansas Ready Mixed Concrete Association (KRMCA) in Washington, D.C. The KRMCA is a non-profit trade organization that is dedicated to bettering the ready mixed concrete industry in Kansas. The association was formed in Kansas in 1948, and since, has been representing producers and associates from the state on many issues. Thanks to Woody Moses of Topeka with the KRMCA.

Special Olympics Kansas

Special Olympics Kansas celebrated the 4th Annual Celebrating Champions fundraising event. For over 40 years, Special Olympics has provided extraordinary service to individuals with intellectual disabilities. The Annual Celebrating Champions event was hosted at the home of Joe and Marian Tintera in Mission Hills. The event brought families, participants and sponsors together to help raise funds for athletes. Last year, Celebrating Champions 2008 raised over \$110,000 for Special Olympics Athletes and programs.

Since 2007, I have served as the Honorary Chairman for the Kansas Law Enforcement Torch Run. Kansas Law Enforcement officers cover hundreds of miles in the Torch Run throughout the state each year and raise thousands of dollars in support of Special Olympics Kansas programs. By supporting Special Olympics, we provide encouragement and an avenue for those with disabilities to grow personally, as well as within their communities.

## Visiting Kansas State University

Dr. Flinchbaugh's Ag Policy Class: This week, I made a surprise visit to Dr. Barry Flinchbaugh's Agriculture Policy class at Kansas State University to talk about my role as a member of Congress and about the importance of federal agriculture tax and trade policy to our state. Dr. Flinchbaugh has been a professor at K-State since 1971 and has focused his teaching on national agricultural and economic policy. During my surprise visit to his class, I discussed how agriculture is a vital part of the Kansas economy. The success of Kansas agriculture and the future of our state go hand in hand. It is essential that we have in place sound public policy to enable the next generation of farmers and ranchers to succeed. It was also a good opportunity for me to take questions from our state's future farmers and ranchers and I enjoyed the dialogue I was able to have with Dr. Flinchbaugh and his students.

College of Agriculture Town Hall: While on the K-State campus, I hosted a one-on-one town hall with students in the College of Agriculture to discuss agriculture policy. I was glad to speak with students and take their questions about federal issues impacting farmers and ranchers in the state. Thank you to the students who participated in the town hall.

Kappa Kappa Gamma Dad's Day Luncheon: Before the football game on Saturday, I attended a Dad's Day Luncheon with my daughter Alex who is a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority. Throughout the school year, the sorority hosts events for families to be involved with Kappa activities. It was good getting to meet other Kappa family members and spending time with my daughter.

Kansas State University vs. Tennessee Tech Football Game: Also on Saturday, I attended the Kansas State University football game against Tennessee Tech with my family. I joined thousands of cheering K-State fans during the university's annual celebration of Fort Riley Day to support the Wildcats. I commend the team for their efforts and wish Coach Bill Snyder and the team success in 2009. It was good to visit K-State President, Dr. Kirk Schulz, and meet his wife Noel and their family. We also joined General Vincent Brooks, the Commanding General of Fort Riley, and his wife.

## Deadline for U.S. Service Academy Nominations Approaching

Kansas students are reminded that the application deadline for U.S. Service Academies is approaching. I am accepting applications for nominations to the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York; the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland; the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York. Those selected will enter the academies in June 2010. My application deadline is November 1, 2009. For more information about U.S. Service Academies, visit the "Services" section of my website, or [click here](#).

## In the Office

Zack and Robyn Odell of Kiowa, Paul Cooper of Hutchinson, Robert and Brandon Koch of Holyrood, Carl Krehbiel of Moundridge, Brian and Robin Boisvert of Wilson, Nathan DeWitt of Madison and Michael Rice of Wamego were in with the Kansas Telecommunications Industry Association to discuss the importance of the Universal Service Fund and potential changes to the USDA's Rural Utility Service to improve telecommunications services in Kansas. John Wade of Overland Park was in with the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society to visit.

Earl Carter of Augusta and Joe Newberry of Derby were in with the Council of Engineers and Scientists Organizations to talk about issues important to the aviation industry in Kansas. Jim Turner of Topeka; Ron Romig, President of Citizens Savings of Leavenworth; and John Dicus, President of Capitol Federal of Topeka were in with the Heartland Community Bankers Association to discuss legislation to add additional regulations on the financial services industry. Herb Swender of Chanute was in to visit.



Linda Radke of Salina and Amber Lucas of Olathe were in with the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists to explain to me the role of pharmacists in health care reform. Chad Moore of Kansas City and Dave Sanford of Wichita were in with Children's Mercy Family Health Partners to visit about access to quality health care. Larry Beam of Topeka was in with the Health Occupations Students of America to discuss emergency preparedness and health care training.

John Kirgan and Rita Jones of Gardner, Gay Cornell of Coffeyville, Sue Landers of Topeka and Sue Jirkovsky-Landers of Tecumseh were in with the Cancer Action Network to advocate for legislative solutions to combat and treat cancer. Sunnee Mickle of Topeka was in with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas to talk about health care reform. Blake West of Overland Park, Mark Farr of Nickerson and Verlean Brown of Wichita were in with the Kansas National Education Association to discuss education and health care issues in Kansas.

Prairie Village Mayor Ron Shaffer, City Administrator Quinn Bennion, Assistant City Administrator Dennis Enslinger and NE Johnson County Chamber of Commerce member Rob Johnson of Prairie Village were in to update me on issues important to the city of Prairie Village. Bob Ricordan and Kevin Travelstead of Overland Park were in with Black and Veach to advocate for opportunities to bring broadband internet to rural communities.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office for a tour of the United States Capitol, including Stan and Jeanne Pangrac of Emporia, Kevin Threlkel of Hays and Zoa Rowlison of Newton.

Very truly yours,

Jerry

